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Ms. Jill Dean
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Mail Code 4606M
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Ms. Dean,

I want to thank the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for this opportunity to comment on the initial design of the EPA's research study on the relationship between hydraulic fracturing and drinking water resources.

Our nation – and particularly the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania – faces an important opportunity to access large quantities of natural gas that can help us meet our domestic energy needs, reduce our dependence on foreign energy sources, and generate thousands of local jobs. Clearly, we should develop the Marcellus Shale, and other shale plays. However, we must do so in a way that demonstrates a sense of responsibility for the quality of life for all Pennsylvanians, the need for our children to have good jobs and a secure economic future and, of course, the safety of the communities in which the drilling takes place.

To do so, we must take appropriate steps now to reduce health, safety, and the environmental risks, while we also take full advantage of our natural resources to take the national and global lead in producing energy for the 21st century. If we exercise due diligence now to ensure these shale plays are developed safely and effectively, we can create stable, plentiful jobs, reduce our dependence on foreign oil and decrease our country's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

This EPA study is a critical part of the process for evaluating potential risks from this development. Done correctly, this study will enable us to take appropriate steps to reduce those risks and the potentially catastrophic, unintended consequences of unchecked exploitation of our resources. That is why I supported and voted for last year's legislation that called for the undertaking of this study.

I support this study's comprehensive framework that encompasses all aspects of the hydraulic fracturing process, from start to finish and including the impact on people's health as well as the environment, which in turn affect our economy's future. In addition, I emphasize that communities in Pennsylvania are facing significant amounts of drilling in relatively small area. They were approved and initiated prior to this study, and created, I believe, in an expeditious manner that is potentially harmful. In addition to understanding the impact of fracking in individual wells, this study must also consider anticipated high density drilling in relatively short

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periods of time to account for the cumulative effects of drilling on a region's drinking water supply.

The study should also include analysis of the ways that the contaminants from the fracking chemicals and the methane used can pollute water below and above ground. The impacts from fracking operations can come from the subsurface fracking itself and the predrilling, but can also result from on-sight storage and disposal of fracking and waste fluids.

In light of the American Society of Civil Engineer's assessment that Pennsylvania has \$7.18 billion in wastewater infrastructure needs, I see a pressing need for the proposed research on the effectiveness of municipal wastewater treatment systems in dealing with hydraulic fracturing flowback – the process by which the potentially dangerous chemicals are brought back to the surface and can potentially be mixed into the regular water supply, as well as ground contamination. These waters are often being directed to Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs) and, as such, the potential of new and existing drinking water and public water treatment technology needs to be assessed.

Another concern that has been raised, and should be examined in the study, is the potential risk of migration that can occur from previously abandoned, but not properly sealed wells in proximity of fracking operations. A recent report from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council noted that, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the location and status of more than one-half of the oil and gas wells that have been drilled in the Commonwealth (approximately 184,000 wells) are unknown.

Pennsylvania's legacy of Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) has left 2,500 miles of deteriorated streams and 250,000 acres of contaminated land in Pennsylvania at the expense of a \$15 billion clean up. The example of AMD highlights the need to establish clear standards for pre-drilling investigations of background conditions to understand the potential for contamination. Accurate scientific data from pre-drilling investigations are needed to counter false claims of pre-existing aquifer contamination.

Finally, the study should include an assessment of the effectiveness of standard engineering controls and safety practices related to the drilling technology itself, along with corresponding regulatory oversight and enforcement measures.

Along with these important elements of the study, it is critical to perform the study and share the results in an open and transparent manner. While I encourage the EPA to create a thorough and scientifically based study, I suggest that they do so in as expeditious a manner as feasible, given strong economic pressures and rapid development already taking place, especially in Pennsylvania. To this end, as the study is not scheduled to be completed until 2012, I request a website be established where interested parties can easily learn about the study, track progress, and access underlying and intermediate data and conclusions.

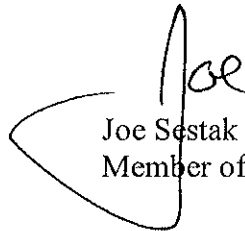
There is extraordinary economic potential associated with the development of Marcellus Shale resources. However, as the oil spill in the Gulf reminds us, there is also great risk. It is therefore

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critical that this study is thorough and completed in a transparent manner, in partnership with other federal agencies. Optimum use must be made of the limited resources available to this study. If the EPA determines that they have been allocated insufficient resources for conducting this project, I expect you will inform me and other elected officials so that we can appropriately address the shortfall.

I look forward to following the study's progress and reading the results, and I appreciate the EPA's commitment to long-term involvement in assessing the impact of hydraulic fracturing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe", written over a large, stylized, hand-drawn loop that extends to the left and bottom.

Joe Sestak
Member of Congress